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BELARUS

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1. The Republic of Belarus covers an area of 207,600 km.

2. The population numbers 10.4 million and is thus comparable in size to that of Hungary, Greece, Portugal, Cuba or Belgium. It comprises 4.9 million men and 5.5 million women.

3. The urban population numbers 7.1 million and the rural population 3.3 million.

4. The population density is 49 per km^2.

5. In terms of administrative-territorial divisions, the Republic comprised, as of 1 January 1994: 6 regions (oblasts), 118 rural districts (selskie raiony), 25 urban districts (raiony v gorodakh), 102 towns, 109 urban-type settlements and 1,452 rural councils.

6. The districts have populations varying in size from 10,000 to 100,000 people. Of the 118 districts, 13 have between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, 30 between 21,000 and 30,000, 32 between 31,000 and 40,000, 22 between 41,000 and 50,000, 11 between 51,000 and 60,000, 5 between 61,000 and 70,000, 4 between 71,000 and 100,000 and 1 more than 100,000 inhabitants. On average, a district has a population of 24,800 people, while each rural council covers an area with 2,268 inhabitants.

7. There are 24,800 rural settlements in the Republic.

8. As regards the ethnic mix in Belarus, more than 100 nations and nationalities live in the Republic. The bulk of the population are Belarusians (7,905,000). There are significant numbers of Russians (1,342,000), Ukrainians (291,000), Poles (418,000) and Jews (112,000).

9. Regarding the population's level of education, the 1989 census found 4,708,000 people with a higher or secondary education. Of the population aged 18 or more, 60 per cent had a higher or secondary education (11 per cent higher education and 49 per cent secondary education); 76.7 per cent of all employed persons had a higher or secondary education.

10. The gap between the levels of education in urban and rural areas is narrowing.

11. At the start of 1994 the size of the population was 10,367,300, comprising 7,073,900 people in towns and 3,293,400 in rural areas. The population living in towns with more than 90,000 inhabitants numbered 4,772,700, or 68 per cent of the total urban population. The city of Minsk accounted for 56 per cent of the total population growth of 902,000.

12. By oblast, population growth over the period 1965-1993 was 285,000 (16 per cent) in Brest oblast, 138,000 (8 per cent) in Vitebsk oblast, 151,000 (8 per cent) in Gomel oblast, 121,000 (7 per cent) in Grodno oblast, 78,000 in Minsk oblast (4 per cent) and 65,000 (3 per cent) in Mogilev oblast.

13. Again between 1965 and 1993 the urban population rose by 3,865,300, or by a factor of 2.2, while the rural population declined by 2,055,900 (38.4 per cent). In 1991, urban dwellers represented 68.2 per cent of the total population, as against 38.5 per cent in 1965.

14. Of the country's administrative divisions, the most heavily urbanized, at 69 per cent, is currently Mogilev oblast. The areas with the lowest proportions of urban dwellers are Brest and Grodno oblasts (60 and 61 per cent respectively).

15. The rate of growth of the urban population is slowing: from 4 per cent in 1965 it had fallen to 2.7 per cent by 1981 and 1.2 per cent by 1992. Between 1965 and 1990 the rural population fell by an average of 74,000 people (2.4 per cent) per year. In 1990 the rural population fell by 80,000, the principal factors being migration (58,000, or 72 per cent) and natural growth (19,000, or 24 per cent).

16. The demographic situation in rural areas is worsening. Births numbered 91,400 in 1965, but only 36,000 in 1993, a drop of 61 per cent, whereas deaths rose during the same period from 40,700 to 66,300, or by 63 per cent. The birth rate per thousand fell from 17.1 to 11.6, while the death rate rose from 7.6 to 20.0. Since 1977, natural growth of the rural population has been negative (deaths have outnumbered births); the figures are: 1965, 9.5; 1970, 4.8; 1977, 0.1; 1980, 2.0; 1990, 5.6; 1993, 9.1.

17. The sex structure of the population is improving. Per 1,000 men there were 1,128 women in 1977, 1,154 women in 1980 and 1,178 women in 1970.

18. Regarding the birth rate, there were 117,400 births in Belarus in 1993, including 81,400 in urban areas and 36,000 in rural areas. The birth rate proper (number of births per 1,000 head of population) was 11.4 overall (11.6 in urban areas and 10.9 in rural areas).

19. The increase in the numbers of births during the period 1981-1987 (from 158,000 to 163,000 per year) was linked to a policy of more active State support for families with children. Now, however, the proportion of young women in the total population of women of child-bearing age is declining: in 1994, the proportion of women aged between 15 and 29 was 42 per cent; in 1979 it was 48 per cent and in 1959 50 per cent. The number of women of child-bearing age (15-49) is also declining as a proportion of the total number of women in the population (1994, 47 per cent; 1979, 49 per cent; 1959, 51 per cent).

20. The combination of this unwelcome change in age structure with the deterioration of living conditions and female employment conditions is adversely affecting birth statistics. Among the factors limiting birth rates is deliberate birth control. In 1993, abortions numbered 85,700, or 84.2 per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 49. The corresponding figures for 1985 were 200,900 and 80.4 per 1,000 - in other words, 57 per cent lower; this is attributable to the introduction of the vacuum aspiration method. Vacuum aspirations in 1993 totalled 127,000, or 8 per cent fewer than in the preceding year. Of the total number of abortions performed in in-patient establishments coming under the Ministry of Health, 9,300, or 11 per cent, concerned primiparas.

21. Again in 1993, live births in in-patient establishments coming under the Ministry of Health totalled 118,100; of these, 5,900 or 5.0 per cent, were premature. Of the children born live, 0.5 per cent had a birth weight of less than 1.5 kg, 4.1 per cent weighed between 1.5 and 2.5 kg, 50.6 per cent between 2.5 and 3.5 kg and 44.9 per cent more than 3.5 kg. For every 1,000 live births, 109 of the children were born ill or rapidly became ill; in 1985 the corresponding figure was 71 per 1,000 births. Among premature children the perinatal morbidity rate was 563 per 1,000 in 1993 and 360 in 1985. The mortality rate was 1.6 per 1,000 for full-term babies and 43 per 1,000 for premature babies.

22. The commonest neonatal health disorders are: pulmonary insufficiency (owing to intra-uterine hypoxia or asphyxia during birth) (almost 33 per cent of all neonatal disorders); respiratory disorder syndromes and other respiratory conditions (13 per cent); intracranial and other birth traumas (4 per cent); acute respiratory infections (3 per cent); congenital pneumonia (1.8 per cent) and pneumonia (0.2 per cent). The number of children born with a congenial anomaly exceeds 2,000 per year. That is 1.7 per cent of the total number of live births.

23. Children's health in the post-natal period is heavily dependent on their mothers' health during pregnancy. Data for 1985 and 1993 shows the following growth rates for disorders in women having carried pregnancies to term: anaemia, from 8 per cent to 20.7 per cent; kidney disorders, from 4 per cent to 9.7 per cent; late-onset toxicosis, from 7 per cent to 7.1 per cent; circulatory disorders, from 4 per cent to 7.5 per cent. In 1993, 24 women died of complications during pregnancy, birth or the post-natal period. This was 20 per 100,000 live births, as against 28 per 100,000 in 1985.

24. Concerning mortality, deaths in Belarus in 1993 totalled 128,600 (urban dwellers: 62,300; rural dwellers: 66,300). The death rate per 1,000 was 12.4 (urban population: 8.8; rural population: 20.0). The principal causes of death are circulatory system disorders, neoplasms, accidents, poisoning or injury, and respiratory diseases. The number of people who died from these causes in 1993 were: circulatory system disorders, 63,600; neoplasms, 19,000; accidents, poisoning or injury, 13,500; and respiratory diseases, 7,100. Of the persons who died from neoplasms, respiratory diseases or circulatory system disorders, 63-84 per cent were aged 60 or more. Of those who died from accidents, poisoning or injury, most were of working age (74 per cent of all persons, and 85.6 per cent of all men, dying from accidents). Of the accidental deaths, most (2,300, or 22 per 100,000 head of population) were attributable to traffic accidents. There were 2,900 suicides (28 per 100,000), 1,100 murders (10.0 per 100,000 and 2,100 deaths from alcohol poisoning (21.0 per 100,000).

25. Infant mortality is one of the most important public-health and demographic indicators. In 1993, deaths among children aged less than one year numbered 1,487 (12.5 per 1,000 live births). The primary causes of infant mortality include: conditions arising during the perinatal period (32 per cent); congenital abnormalities (more than one third); respiratory diseases (15 per cent), and infectious and parasitic diseases (11 per cent). The poor figures for infant mortality are largely attributable to the state of women's health, which is being adversely affected by difficult living conditions, the inadequacy of medical services and the employment of women in arduous and dangerous conditions.

26. Life expectancy has declined in Belarus. In 1992 it was 70.3 years, as against 71.1 years in 1990 (for women, 75.4 years as against 75.6 years).

27. The rate of population growth can also be affected by changes in migration processes. Emigration has declined in recent years. According to figures from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the number of people leaving for permanent residence abroad has declined: it was 15,000 in 1989, 34,000 in 1990, 22,000 in 1991 and 10,000 in 1992.

28. In 1993, 57,000 people came to live in urban areas; 34,000 (59.6 per cent) of them came from the Russian Federation, 6,000 (10.5 per cent) from Ukraine and 3,000 (5.3 per cent) from Kazakhstan. In the same year, 31,000 people left urban areas; 23,000 (74.2 per cent) went to the Russian Federation, 6,000 (19.4 per cent) to Ukraine, 5,400 (2 per cent) to the Russian Far East and 100 (0.3 per cent) to Kazakhstan.

29. Emigrants from rural areas numbered 15,400; 10,300 (66.7 per cent) of them went to the Russian Federation, 3,000 (20.0 per cent) to Ukraine, 100 (0.7 per cent) to Kazakhstan and 100 (0.7 per cent) to the Baltic States. The number of rural inhabitants who changed their place of residence within Belarus was 154,400 (75 per cent). Because of the movement from rural to urban areas, the total number of rural dwellers fell by 339,200 between 1986 and 1990. The direction of the rural exodus is mostly towards large cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants.

30. As regards the number and composition of households, the 1989 census found 2,796,000 households in Belarus. Of these, 972,000 (34.8 per cent) were two-person households, 766,000 (27.4 per cent) three-person households, 748,000 (26.7 per cent) four-person households, 212,000 (7.6 per cent) five-person households and 98,000 (3.5 per cent) households of six persons or more. Commonest were two-person households and, in urban areas, four-person households.

31. Household size averaged 3.2 persons in 1989, as against 3.3 persons in 1979. The corresponding figures for rural areas were 3.0 and 3.3, while the average household size in urban areas remained unchanged, at 3.3 persons.

32. Figures from a one-off sample survey show that, of the young married couples questioned, 17 per cent had no children and 83 per cent had children. Of the couples with children, 57 per cent had one child, 40 per cent two children and 3 per cent three or more children. Of the couples without children, 49 per cent expressed an intention to have two children, 11 per cent an intention to have three children and 28 per cent to have none. These couples considered the ideal number of children in a household to be two.

33. One of the factors of the decline in the number of children per household is households' financial situation. Of the households surveyed in 1969 that kept a budget and had children below 16 years of age, 24.5 per cent had a total income per head at or below the subsistence level, which the Supreme Council of Belarus set in January 1989 at 125 roubles. The households in question comprise mainly those with three or more children, as well as 29 per cent of those with two children and 14 per cent of those with one child. It has been calculated that in 1989 the number of children below 16 years of age who lived in families with a total income per head at or below the subsistence level was 1.4 million, or 55 per cent of the total.

34. Concerning marriage and divorce, 82,300 marriages were registered in Belarus in 1993, 59,400 in urban areas and 22,900 in rural areas. Marriage rates were highest among men in the 20-24 age group and women in the 18-24 age group: 44,000 men and 58,000 women in these groups got married in 1993, representing respectively 53.1 per cent of the men and 70.3 per cent of the women to marry in that year. By comparison with 1965 the total number of marriages was 11,700, or 16.6 per cent, higher in 1993: marriages increased by 24,600 (70.5 per cent) higher in urban areas and fell by 12,800 (36.1 per cent) lower in rural areas.

35. Divorces in 1993 numbered 44,900: 37,500 in urban areas and 7,400 in rural areas. There were 32,500 more divorces in 1993 than in 1965.

36. In 1993 the marriage rate per 1,000 was 7.9 (8.4 in urban areas and 6.9 in rural areas), while the divorce rate per 1,000 was 4.3 (5.3 in urban areas and 2.2 in rural areas).

37. Most men and women divorce between the ages of 25 and 34. Every third divorce in Belarus concerns a recent marriage, i.e. one less than five years old. Of the total number of divorces, 32.2 per cent concern men under 30 years of age and 40.5 per cent women under that age. The number of divorces registered is rising faster each year than the number of marriages.

For every 100 marriages registered, there were 55 divorces in 1993 and 14 divorces in 1965. Young couples encounter problems in the first years of marriage.

38. The one-off sample survey of 1,700 young married couples showed that almost all young couples (95 per cent) in their first marriage had problems. The main problems cited were: housing problems, 71 per cent; financial problems, 60 per cent; considerable decrease in spare time, 30 per cent; difficulties in making purchases for a child, 23 per cent; problems with in-laws, 21 per cent.

39. Households rate their financial situation as follows: satisfactory, 12 per cent; unsatisfactory, 38 per cent; not entirely satisfactory, 48 per cent. In households dissatisfied with their financial situation, average minimum monthly expenditure exceeds gross income by 4 per cent. In households satisfied with their financial situation, gross income exceeds minimum expenditure by 25 per cent.

40. In households with three or more children, food accounts for over half (61 per cent) of the minimum expenditure; in households without children the corresponding proportion is 51 per cent. Purchases of clothing and footwear account for 33 per cent of minimum expenditure.

41. Young married couples dissatisfied with their financial situation intend to improve it as follows: 57 per cent will wait for a wage increase, 30 per cent will seek better paying employment, 23 per cent mean to save more, 17 per cent hope for assistance from the State and 10 per cent for assistance from relatives, while 9 per cent do not intend to take any action. At the time of the survey, 75 per cent of the young couples were living in their own accommodation and 25 per cent of them with relatives. Of the couples without children, only 59 per cent were living in their own accommodation.

42. Of the total number of young couples surveyed, more than half (59 per cent) were living in individual apartments, while 3 per cent were living in shared apartments, 15 per cent in hostels, 22 per cent in individual houses and 1 per cent in barracks or other premises. In terms of living space, 34 per cent of the young couples had more than 9 m^2 per person, and 10 per cent had more then 13 m^2 per person. On the other hand, 45 per cent of the couples had 7 m^2 or less per person; 20 per cent had less than 5 m^2 per person. Of the couples living in their own accommodation, 36 per cent were living in one-room accommodation.

43. Young couples with living parents generally maintain close contacts with them. Of these couples, 92 per cent receive assistance from their relatives: for 46 per cent of the couples living apart from their parents, this assistance is in the form of financial support; for 23 per cent of them, it is in the form of child-minding. For 18 per cent of the couples, the parents buy or send food; for 10 per cent they buy or send other goods. For 9 per cent of the couples, the parents have the children in their homes during holidays. In turn, 85 per cent of the young couples who live in their own accommodation help their parents, in most cases (77 per cent) with housekeeping.

44. In terms of socio-economic structure, the 1989 census showed the population to comprise 5,662,300 manual workers (55.8 per cent), 2,870,400 non-manual workers (28.3 per cent) and 1,604,500 members of collective farms (15.8 per cent). Within these groups, economically active persons numbered respectively 3,024,700 (57.5 per cent), 1,654,600 (31.1 per cent) and 599,900 (11.3 per cent).

45. A total of 4,004,100 persons (76 per cent) were employed in material production, while 1,273,300 persons (24 per cent) were employed in the non-material sphere. Between 1970 and 1989, the proportion of persons employed in material production fell from 81.2 per cent to 75.6 per cent. Over the same period, the proportions of those employed in particular sectors rose as follows: industry, from 25.6 per cent to 31.1 per cent; construction, from 7.7 per cent to 8.7 per cent; trade, catering, supply and sale of materials and equipment, or semi-manufactures, from 6.1 per cent to 7.4 per cent. The proportion of those employed in agriculture fell from 34.5 per cent to 19.9 per cent. The proportion of persons employed in non-material spheres rose from 18.6 per cent in 1970 to 24.0 per cent to 1989.

46. Persons employed in physical labour numbered 3,574,100 (67.5 per cent) and persons employed in intellectual labour 1,721,500 (32.5 per cent). Urban dwellers accounted for 65.3 per cent of the persons employed in physical labour and 80.9 per cent of the persons employed in intellectual labour. Intellectual workers accounted for 23.5 per cent of all workers in 1970 and 32.5 per cent in 1989. In urban areas the corresponding figures were 34.5 per cent and 37.4 per cent; in rural areas they were 13.0 per cent and 20.9 per cent.